

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 3557

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EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR KS JA
SUBJ: ROKF/JAPAN CONTINENTAL SHELF AGREEMENT

REF: SEOUL 3552

SUMMARY: ROKG IS MOVING INTO HIGH GEAR ON CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE WITH JAPAN. AMBASSADOR URGED RESTRAINT IN DISCUSSIONS WITH DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER NAM AND OTHER KOREANS. APPARENT THAT PRESIDENT PARK PERSONALLY DIRECTING KOREAN COUNTER MEASURES. END SUMMARY

1. ROKG COMPAIGN TO CUNTER JAPANESE DIET FAILURE TO RATIFY CONTINENTAL SHELF AGREEMENT ON APRIL 28 IS MOVING INTO HIGH GEAR. AT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SESSION YESTERDAY APRIL 29, PRIME MINISTER CHOI AND FOREIGN MINISTER PARK WERE HIGHLY CRITICAL OF JAPANESE, TREATENED UNILATERAL ACTION,AND ANNOUNCED PLANS TO PROCLAIM 12 MILE TERRITORIAL WATERS AND 200 MILE ECONOMIC SEA. GENERAL CONCLUSION OF KOREANS IS THAT AGREEMENT IS "VIRTUALLY KILLED" AND JAPANESE ACTION, CONFIDENTIAL

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IN WORDS OF PRIME MINISTER "COULD BE REGARDED AS INSULT". CABINET MEETS TODAY WITH PRESIDENT PARK AND WILL DISCUSS COUNTER MEASURES INCLUDING "READJUSTMENT OF RELATIONS WITH JAPAN". PRESS REPORTING ALL DEVELOPMENTS WITH STRONG OVERTONE ANTI-JAPANESE FLAVOR.

2. LAST EVENING, AT JAPANESE NATIONAL DAY RECEPTION, I

CORNED DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER NAM AND SEVERAL OTHER KEY KOREAN INDIVIDUALS ON THE CONTINENTAL SHELF AGREEMENT AND URGED RESTRAINT AND PATIENCE ON PART OF ROKG. I POINTED OUT POLITICAL PROBLEMS FACED BY PRIME MINISTER FUKUDA, REASONS FOR GOJ RELUCTANCE TO RATIFY CONTINENTAL SHELF AGREEMENT THROUGH DIET APRIL 28 AND PLANS FOR GOJ TO CONTINUE FURTHER DIET RATIFICATION EFFORT AFTER GOLDEN WEEK. (I LEARNED IN FACT FROM JAPANESE EMBASSY COUNSELOR MABUCHI THAT THE GOJ PLANS TO EXTEND DIET SESSION FOR TEN DAYS IF LOWER HOUSE RATIFICATION CAN BE ACHIEVED AS SCHEDULED MAY 10.) I ALSO STRESSED TO NAM AND OTHERS THAT THIS IS NOT RPT NOT TIME FOR KOREANS, IN THEIR OWN INTEREST, TO SERIOUSLY WORSEN THEIR RELATIONS WITH JAPAN. KOREA HAS ENOUGH PROBLEMS WITHOUT ADDING ANOTHER MAJOR DIFFICULTY. WHILE EXPRESSING UNDERSTANDING OF KOREAN IMPATIENCE, I GAVE NO REPEAT NO INDICATION OF U.S. SYMPATHY OR SUPPORT FOR CURRENT KOREAN TACTICS. I URGED INSTEAD THAT A CONCERTED EFFORT BE MADE TO WORK OUT PROBLEMS WITH FUKUDA, RATHER THAN ENGAGING IN THREATS AND BLUSTER.

3. NAM, AFTER PERfunctory EFFORTS TO JUSTIFY ROKG POSTURE, ACKNOWLEDGED VALIDITY OF MY COMMENTS. BUT HE ALSO INDICATED CAMPAIGN AGAINST JAPANESE IS UNDER PERSONAL ORDERS OF PRESIDENT PARK, WHO HAS TAKEN VERY TOUGH AND UNCOMPROMISING STAND. NAM AND ANOTHER PARTICIPANT IN TODAY'S CABINET SESSION WILL, I SUSPECT, PRESENT AT LEAST DRIFT OF MY COMMENTS.

4. I ALSO TALKED OVER THE PROBLEM BRIEFLY WITH JAPANESE AMBASSADOR NISHIYAMA. NISHIYAMA IS RETURNING TO TOKYO
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TODAY, APRIL 30, IN AN EFFORT TO BRIDGE GAP BETWEEN ROKG AND GOJ ON THE CONTINENTAL SHELF QUESTION. NISHIYAMA IS UNDERSTANDING OF KOREAN VIEWS, BUT CONCERNED THAT THREATENING TACTICS WILL ONLY BE COUNTER PRODUCTIVE IN JAPAN, A POINT I ALSO MADE TO KOREANS.

5. COMMENT: KOREAN MOVES WHICH EMBRACE THREATS TO CURTAIL JAPANESE IMPORTS, IS PAR FOR THE COURSE WHEN DEALING WITH JAPANESE. HOWEVER, IN RECENT MONTHS IN PART AS REACTION TO U.S. GROUND FORCE WITHDRAWAL, KOREANS HAVE STARTED TO MOVE CLOSER TO JAPAN. REACTION TO DIET FAILURE TO PASS AGREEMENT, THEREFORE, OUT OF STEP IN THIS CONTEXT. MY READING IS THAT PRESIDENT PARK IS REACTING LESS TO DIET ACTION THAN TO HIS PROBLEMS WITH USG. UNABLE TO GIVE VENT TO HIS FRUSTRATIONS AT MOUNTING U.S. PRESSURES ON HUMAN RIGHTS AS WELL AS TROOP WITHDRAWL ISSUE, PARK HAS LASHED OUT AGAINST JAPANESE, WHOM HE INNATELY DISTRUSTS. WHILE I THINK WE MUST CONTINUE URGING RESTRAINT UPON KOREANS SOME SORT OF CONCILIATORY GESTURE BY FUKUDA GOVERNMENT REFLECTING

"UNDERSTANDING" OF KOREAN DISAPPOINTMENT AND FRUSTRATIONS WOULD
BE TIMELY AND HELPFUL. FURTHERMORE, AS I UNDERSTAND THERE IS
STILL DISTINCT POSSIBILITY FOR DIET ACTION THIS SESSION.
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